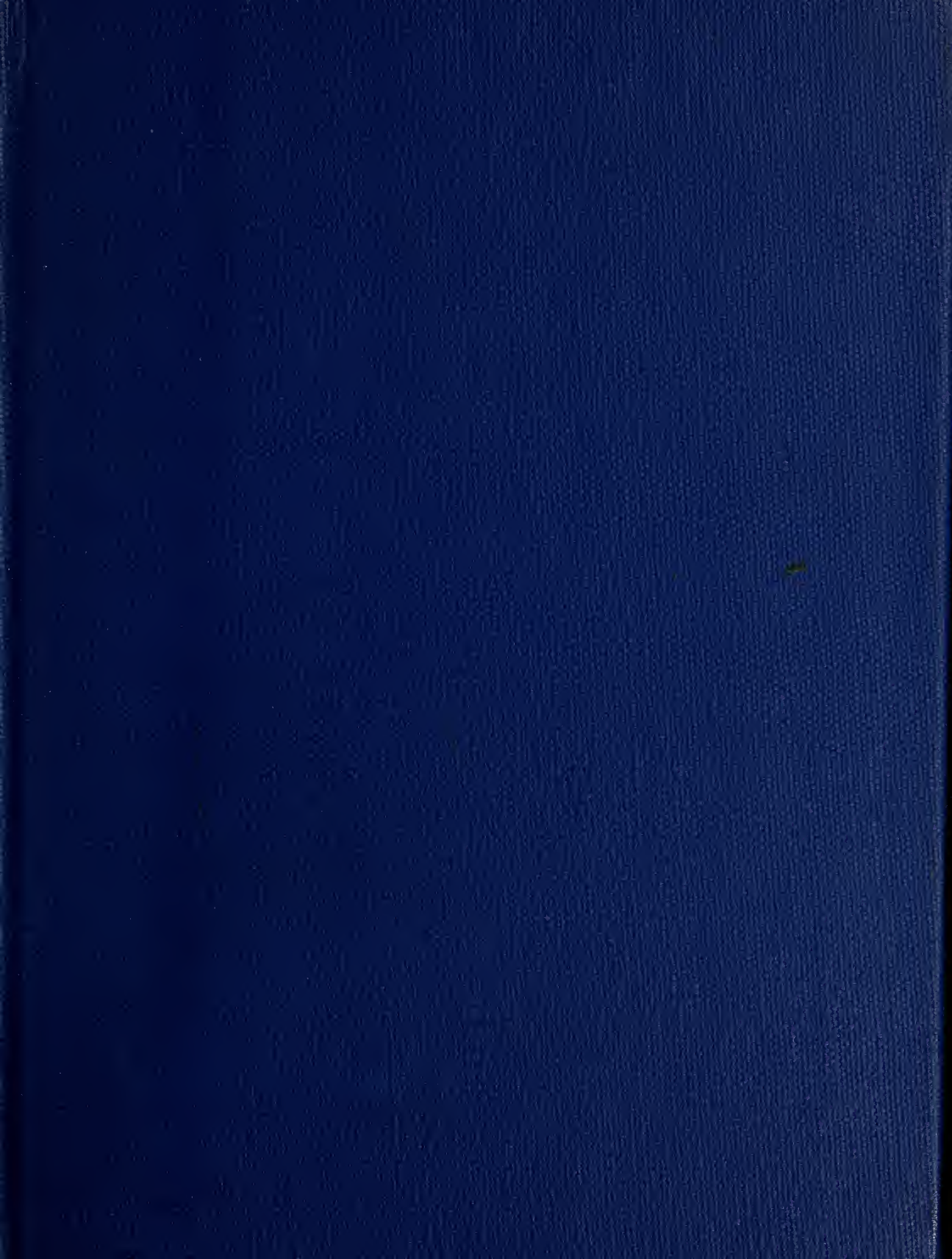




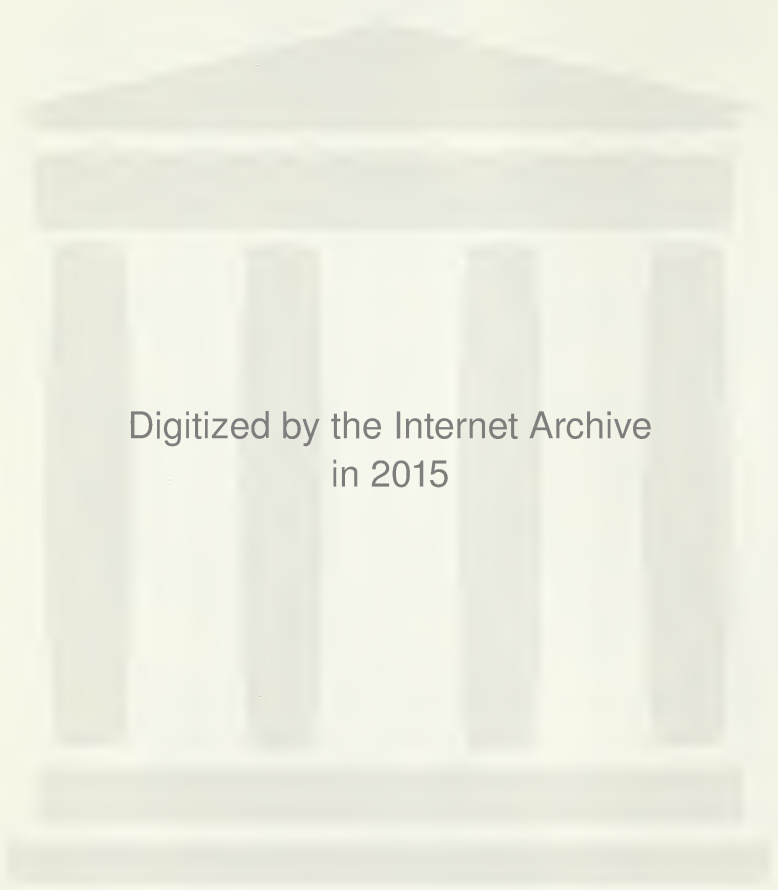
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THE
CITY OF NEW-YORK:

ITS
GROWTH, DESTINIES, AND DUTIES.

A LECTURE,

DELIVERED BY

JOHN A. DIX,

BEFORE THE

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT METROPOLITAN
HALL, ON THE 6TH DAY OF JANUARY, 1853.

NEW-YORK.
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THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

IN the opening lecture of the series in which I have been invited to take part, you were addressed with great eloquence and force on the culture of Art, with a special reference to this city. So far as the application is concerned, I propose to follow the example of the distinguished speaker, but in a much more humble sphere. I shall, with your indulgence, devote the hour allotted to me to a brief review of the growth of this city, some glances into the future, to see, if we can, what are its probable destinies, and the discussion of a few topics of domestic interest and social duty.

It is a remarkable circumstance that the Hollanders, who laid the foundations of this city, should have foreseen, more than two centuries ago, the commercial pre-eminence to which it was destined. In September 1652, forty-three years after the landing of Hendrick Hudson, the directors of the West India Company, in a letter to Peter Stuyvesant, the Director General, urged on him the importance of promoting commerce with the settlers in New England and Virginia, by which means, they say, "must the Mannhattans prosper," and their trade and navigation flourish. "For when," the letter adds, "these once become permanently established—when the ships of New Netherland ride on every part of the ocean—then numbers, now looking to that coast with eager eyes, will be allured to embark for your island." If these sagacious adventurers had looked forward to the changes which the lapse of two hundred years has wrought, their language could hardly

have been more prophetic or descriptive of the reality. Great discoveries, it is true, have been made in the application of physical powers to the practical uses of mankind, which were not, at that day, revealed to human foresight. The luxuries which always follow in the train of commerce, the resistless power of our enterprise, the manifestations of industry in an endless variety of forms—the genius, with which architecture has elaborated this hall—all denote a spirit of development in civilization and in art, which no vividness of the imagination would have attributed, even at this day, to the wilderness, on the skirts of which that feeble and precarious lodgment had been made.

Indeed, it was not until the United States had thrown off the colonial shackles, by which the spirit of their enterprise was repressed, and the central government had given strong evidence of its ability to sustain the weight of the system it was designed to uphold, that the elements of this city's growth became fully developed. Since that time its progress has had no parallel in the history of modern improvement.

Fifty years ago, Canal-street was entirely beyond the settled precincts of the city. The place of public execution was in Franklin-street, selected, as all such theatres of the vengeance of the law were at that day, on account of its distance from the abodes of the people, and the busy haunts of commerce and industry. Thirty years ago, the spot on which I stand, was an unoccupied space far from the bustle and the activities of the town. Now at least eight of the twenty-two square miles of surface which the island contains, are covered, the population has risen, in half a century, from 60,000 souls to 550,000, and is increasing with augmenting rapidity. A quarter of a century ago, in a pamphlet, which I wrote while a student at law, on the resources of the city of New-York, I expressed the belief that in 1878, twenty-five years hence, the inhabitants would number nearly a million and a half, and that the whole island would be covered with dwellings, and buildings devoted to trade, the mechanic arts and the various other uses, which a large commercial population requires.

The estimate was, by most persons, thought extravagant at the time it was made, and was, by many, derided as a wild

and unwarrantable speculation. And yet it has been thus far outrun by the progress of the city. All past estimates, however unsupported they may have appeared to be by sober calculations, are mere laggards in the race, which we are running against time and the impediments to human progress. It is not probable that I shall live to see my prophecy fulfilled, but there are, no doubt, many within the sound of my voice who will. Setting apart the spaces needed for squares, reservoirs, railway appurtenances, shops, warehouses, manufactories, and public edifices, and the island will not conveniently contain more than a million and a half of people. But this is by no means the limit to its growth. Its population will flow into surrounding spaces. The process has already commenced. It has crossed the East River, the North River, and the Harlem. Brooklyn, Williamsburgh, Jersey City, and Morrisania, are all dependencies of the great metropolis, and for every practical purpose, parts of it. A circle with a radius of four miles in extent, and with its centre at Union Square, will now inclose seven hundred and fifty thousand people. If the population of the city and the surrounding districts referred to increases as rapidly during the next twenty-eight years, as it has during the last twenty-five, it will number in 1865, a million and a half of souls, and in 1880 three millions.

If our peaceful relations with other countries continue uninterrupted, I see no reason why there should be any check to this increase. The rapid improvement of the country, the extension of our commerce, the tide of immigration, the numberless lines of communication pointing to this city as to a centre of radiation—all combine to confirm, and, indeed, to accelerate its growth. In the pamphlet referred to, published in 1827, I remember to have stated that the inhabitants of the States of New-York, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and of the territory of Michigan, whose industry was subservient to the commercial interests of the city, and dependent on it for foreign products, numbered nearly a million and a half of souls; and I estimated that the number would, in 1840, amount to nearly three millions, and in 1878, to more than five millions and a half. This estimate also has already been vastly exceeded by the result. Taking the same basis, modified by

the railway communications, which have been opened to the city, and the population of interior districts now dependent upon us for their commercial supplies, cannot number less than five millions and a half—about equal to the number estimated for the year 1878. We are a quarter of a century in advance of this estimate, and with no apparent limit to the growth of the districts thus connected with us. This extraordinary extension of the internal trade of the city is due, in some degree, to railways, which did not enter into the estimate of its increase twenty-five years ago, because they had not then been introduced into this State. Our communication with Lake Erie, and the agricultural supplies it receives from the Northwestern States, is now more speedy and more certain than our intercourse was with Dutchess county fifty years ago. Five hundred miles are now more easily and speedily overcome, both as regards travel and transportation, than fifty miles were at the commencement of the present century. One of the practical effects of these facilities of intercourse is to place the products of the interior of this State and of the States I have referred to at the very outskirts of the city, and to bring the immense variety of the products of other countries, which centre here, into virtual contact with the interior.

Who shall venture to assign limits to this extension? London, with far inferior capacities for commerce, foreign or domestic, has a population of two millions and a half, spread over a surface of forty square miles. With the further advantage, which New-York possesses, as a general mart, to some extent, for the whole Union, there is no reason why she may not go far beyond the British metropolis.

There is another element which is destined to exert a powerful influence on her growth. By means of the warehouse system, yet in its infancy, she is rapidly becoming a mercantile *dépôt* for the western hemisphere. The foreign products, which are destined for consumption on this side of the Atlantic, will be deposited here for distribution, and thus put largely in requisition our industry and capital.

This accumulation of men and of commercial wealth must bring with it another consequence of equal significance and

efficacy. New-York, with all these advantages, cannot fail to become, at no distant day, the centre of the pecuniary, as well as the commercial, exchanges for this continent, and perhaps, for the world. Such a consequence is almost inseparable from a decided ascendancy in commerce. Money, the instrument of commerce, naturally flows into the channels where commercial operations are most extended and active. The precious metals of California will not only insure, but must hasten this result. Like the products of foreign industry, they will come here for distribution, stimulating our enterprise and facilitating commercial exchanges.

I am sure I speak the sentiments of every person here present when I say, that the great prosperity of our own city has not made us indifferent to that of others. Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and New Orleans, have their commercial offices to perform in their respective spheres, and there is work enough to be done on this continent to keep us all actively and beneficially employed. When the census of 1850 apprised us that our industrious and energetic neighbor, Philadelphia, numbered over four hundred thousand inhabitants, and was following us closely in enterprise and wealth, I am sure there was no other feeling but of gratification at her prosperity. Between Pennsylvania and New-York there must always be a close and familiar association. We border on each other for a distance of more than three hundred miles. Though our interests are not in all respects the same, they are coincident in some remarkable particulars. Indeed, there is, in one respect, so striking an adjustment of her capabilities to our wants, that there never can be, in the commercial relations of the two States, any other rivalry than an honorable and beneficial competition. I refer to the inexhaustible and inestimable wealth of her coal fields, which are indispensable to the prosperity of our commercial metropolis. Not only the city of New-York, but a large number of our counties, with a population of a million and a half of souls, and increasing rapidly, are dependent on her supplies of fuel for their comfort. It is a curious fact, that the instant we reach the northern boundary of Pennsylvania from her interior, the coal measures disappear! Not a trace of this great

article of necessity is to be found on our side of the line. What makes it more singular is, that this boundary is a mere statistical demarcation, not marked out by any great natural division—not following a water course, or a mountain chain, but traversing both rivers and hills by a line drawn parallel to the equator. May we not regard it as one of those arrangements of Providence, which, in our ignorance or our presumption, we are too apt to ascribe to blind chance? I say, may we not regard it as an arrangement of Providence to bind inseparably to each other these two great States (constituting, as they do, the heart of the American Confederacy), and to give them the influence they may possibly need, in the progress of events, to maintain the integrity of the Union, by holding together in the same bonds of friendship the other associated States?

Heavy responsibilities, grave questions of social and domestic duty, grow out of our commercial pre-eminence. Extraordinary aggregations of wealth, unless rightly employed, are never desirable. When they become the ministers of luxury and extravagance, they misdirect industry, pervert the public taste, and endanger the purity of society and the safety of the government. This is the great danger we have to guard against. It is the greater because the chief security of our free institutions has always been deemed to rest essentially upon the maintenance of a simple and economical government. I do not believe it to be possible for such a government to be continued in existence for any length of time, unless the social spirit conforms to it. A luxurious and extravagant people cannot maintain a simple and frugal government. No matter with what safeguards it may be surrounded; they will be silently relaxed until they conform to the social condition of the people. Private profusion comes first, next corporate recklessness and extravagance, and last of all public corruption. This, then, is the great duty which devolves on us—to make the spirit of the social conform to the political organization, and maintain both in simplicity and economy. I know it is a very difficult duty where wealth abounds, and draws after it the temptations to profuse expenditure, with which it is always beset. But let us hope that it is not impos-

sible. Certainly, the most superficial view of our social organization should be sufficient to indicate the folly of all private extravagancies, which partake of the character of permanent investments. The most common manifestation of lavish expenditure at the present moment, is in costly private dwellings. We have, like Genoa, our streets of palaces, but without her apology for them. We have no orders of nobility, no permanent estates to support large establishments. Private fortunes are exceedingly evanescent with us. The regular operation of our laws is to dissolve the accumulations of wealth which are the fruit of successful enterprise. There are very few instances in which property remains in a family beyond the second or third generation. Our forefathers abolished rules of primogeniture, because they considered them inconsistent with the genius of our institutions. The spirit of the community has conformed to this view of social duty, and no man thinks of leaving his property by will (as he may) to one child, for the purpose of keeping up a large establishment. A juster feeling has become universal, and children are endowed equally with the ancestral goods, or at least in proportion to their respective claims or merits, as the ancestor appreciates them. Under these circumstances, nothing can be more unwise than the erection of costly dwellings, which can only be maintained by princely fortunes. At the death of the head of the family, and the division of the ancestral property, no one of the children, as a general rule, has enough to support the establishment, and it passes into other hands. Nothing can be more unjust to children than to bring them up with expectations, which cannot be fulfilled, or with habits of life, which they are compelled to abandon. The parent, for the sake of a few years of ostentation, invests a large portion of his estate in a splendid dwelling, with the certainty that his death will be the signal for the expulsion of his children from it. Look for the splendid mansions of thirty years ago, and see what has become of them. Scarcely one remains in the family by which it was constructed. They are boarding-houses, places of public exhibition, or the workshops of fashion. The daughter enters the house of which her father was the master, and chatters for a Parisian mantilla or bon-

net in the sacred chamber in which she drew her first breath. In a large commercial city, extending rapidly, the currents of business and fashion sometimes change and bring with them these consequences. But they are more frequently the result of other causes. They are generally the consequence of the inability of any one of the children to maintain the paternal mansion, with the share of the estate which has fallen to him.

Under these social disabilities, no man of fortune should build a house, which any one of his children, with the share of the property he is likely to inherit, will not be able to retain. If he does, the chances are ten to one that his descendants, before a single generation shall have passed away, will be compelled to quit the paternal mansion, and do violence to all the endearing associations, which connect themselves with the family fireside and the natal roof. Nothing can be more heart-sickening if this necessity is met with sensibility, or more demoralizing to the feelings, if it is submitted to with indifference. It has sometimes been said of us reproachfully, that we have no local attachments—no ancestral associations, which endear to us the places occupied by those who have preceded us in the journey of life. In a community like ours, in a state of rapid progression and change, and in which the philosophy of jurisprudence looks to the distribution rather than the accumulation of the proceeds of labor, local ties are unquestionably apt to be loosely worn. This is more especially true in cities, where private residences are often forcibly expelled by the irresistible encroachments of commerce and traffic. In the broader spaces which the country affords, there is happily room left for the sanctity of local attachments, and for the cultivation of those associations, which cling to the spots where the bones of our ancestors repose, and where our own eyes, or those of our children, first saw the light.

I consider it as one of the greatest securities of this city, so far as a cultivation of the social affections and virtues is concerned, that it is so closely connected by railways with the rural districts in its vicinity. In one hour, the man of business or the mechanic may pass from the close confinement of his office, his counting-room, or his workshop, into the pure

atmosphere of the country. The effect of these facilities is to withdraw from the city, during the genial seasons of the year, a large portion of its inhabitants—to take men away from the town, where they are busy only with their own works, and place them where they must necessarily become conversant with the works of nature and of nature's God. As the clear atmosphere of the country is the best purifier of the *malaria* of the great cities, so are the quietude and the simple occupations of rural life the most salutary and efficient corrective of their extravagancies and luxurious habits. There is nothing so full of hope and of promise for the purity and the invigoration of our social condition, as the growing, I might almost say the prevailing, disposition to escape from the bustle, the show and the ceremoniousness of the city, as soon as the genial season returns, and take refuge from them all in the quietude, the simplicity and the freedom of the country. Indeed, large numbers of the working classes have made permanent changes in their homes. No one can go from the city on any of the great railroads terminating here, without being struck with the number of villages, which have sprung into life within the last three years. They consist, for the most part, of cottages, each with its little garden and grassplot, with here and there a larger enclosure answering better to the designation of a field. These new creations are the work of the mechanics of the city, who have wisely exchanged close streets and crowded dwellings, where space and pure air are alike unattainable, for rural habitations where they can enjoy both. They have their schools and churches and their quiet neighborhoods, where their children may be brought up without being exposed to the contaminations of the town. What an improvement is this upon the former estate of the industrious man—upon summer evenings in town, when the labors of the day were over, passed in close apartments rarely visited by a breath of pure air, or upon side-walks, with pavements and brick walls sending out in fiery streams the heat they had accumulated while the sun was upon them! Now a railway takes him from his rural home in the morning to his work in town, and after his ten hours of labor, he returns to his home again, and passes what remains of daylight in his garden, or

sits down with his family at his own porch, with the bosom of his mother earth unveiled before him, and with the shrubs and flowers he has planted, sending out freshness and fragrance to soothe and invigorate him for the labors of another day.

The healthy influence of this new life upon the mind, the moral affections and the physical energies of the industrious classes, is beyond all power of appreciation.

To the man of independent circumstances, who can afford to have a house in town, and another in the country, a similar change of life, for a portion of the year at least, would be equally beneficial, under all its moral as well as its physical aspects. It is the love for rural scenes and rural occupations, which, above all other causes combined, has given to the higher classes in England an intellectual and corporeal vigor unknown to the same classes in most other countries of Europe. Where the country residence ranks first and the town house second in the scale of the affections,—where the thoughts are, as it were, embalmed in the purifying influences of rural life—there is no danger that a community will fall into decrepitude on the one hand, or dissoluteness on the other. The most seductive capitals and the most demoralizing, so far as all elevation of thought is concerned, are those which concentrate all the attractions of life in themselves, and where the districts by which they are surrounded are devoid of rural beauty.

A rural residence, if it be simple and unpretending, is one of the best moral teachers to the inhabitant of the town. If it have all the show of the town house, and the “pomp and circumstance” of the winter are maintained in summer, he will gain little by the change. The most friendly wish to the wealthy would be that every family might have its cottage, where the ostentation of equipage, the ceremoniousness of fashionable attendance, and the luxurious habits of the city, might be laid aside for a portion of the year, and where children might be taught the salutary lesson (a hard one, when necessity is the first to teach it,) that the trappings of artificial life may be thrown off without sacrificing enjoyment or personal dignity. The cost of half a dozen city entertainments

would provide such an establishment, and it would be repaid an hundredfold in health and intellectual vigor.

Nature has given us around the city a country singularly varied in its outline, from the quiet shores of the East River and the Sound to the majestic scenery of the Hudson; and with one half the expenditure which is wasted upon frivolous embellishment, it may in twenty-five years be made the most beautiful suburban district on the face of the globe.

In connection with this subject, I cannot forbear to congratulate you on the marked improvement which has taken place within the last twenty-five years in our domestic architecture. The era of Grecian pediments and colonnades for private dwellings is happily past, and, it is to be hoped, to return no more. The substitution of the Norman, Gothic, modern Italian, and English cottage styles is a great gain both as regards convenience and rural embellishment. The most simple of these forms are always in best taste. There is great danger of running too much into ornament, and giving a meretricious cast to our domestic improvements. While in the city the prevailing tendency to overload with ornament literally revels in stucco, and developes itself in the most unmeaning shapes, in the country it runs wild in pinnacles, fantastic vergeboards, and in the endless foliations and efflorescences of the mediæval styles. All this is in the worst taste. A chaste simplicity adapted to our institutions, to the nature of our government, the character of our people and the equalizing spirit of our laws, is demanded by every consideration of congruity and every dictate of good sense. It were greatly to be desired that some architect would give the rein to his genius, and, rising above the tyranny of rules, would give birth to an American style—a style suited to our means, our tastes, our wants, and the peculiarities of our climate. The English cottage style, the most picturesque of all for rural architecture, would not be suited to us without essential modifications. We must have deep verandahs and protected attics to shelter us from the scorching heat of our summer sun. Our interior arrangements must have their modifications also, to meet peculiarities in our social condition. No man is equal to the work who is not thoroughly imbued with the

spirit of our system, and who has not the strength to burst away from all the bonds with which the Delilahs of fashion will strive to fetter his genius and his independence of thought.

There is one sphere of embellishment in which there can be no excess—in the cultivation of trees and plants, and in the enrichment by artificial culture of the numberless forms under which exuberant nature manifests herself in the realms of vegetable life. The simplest dwelling, surrounded by shade and verdure, is always attractive. It is in these accessories to rural architecture that the great charm of the country in England consists. Her country houses are very rarely faultless when brought to the test of strict architectural rules. Indeed, they are often ungraceful in design and rude in execution. But with the woodbine covering up the porch, and the ivy climbing up the gable and the oriel, and enveloping them in verdure and in shade, they have a charm which no others possess. Such as these I should wish our rural habitations to be. Let the wealthy go forth from their luxurious city dwellings, and make themselves familiar with the beauties of nature, while there is time left to enjoy them. Let them busy themselves in planting trees around their rustic abodes, let them teach the vine where to entwine itself, and the shrub where to grow and to flower. Let their children mingle with them in these primeval occupations, the purest and the most grateful which life affords, and they shall be stronger, happier and better men. Their children will grow up with juster views of their responsibilities and duties, with more vigorous frames and purer affections, and with stouter hearts for the battle of life.

No man can look out upon the living forms, which are gathering beauty and strength from his fostering care, without feeling his thoughts elevated and purified. He knows that his own hand is laboring with the hand of God, and that he himself, though but a created being with limited capacities, is giving to the works of the Almighty, a beauty and a grace, which but for his care they would never have possessed. Thoughts like these diminish the distance between him and the Author of his existence, and strengthen the hope that

there may be, when the fulness of time shall come, a higher, a closer, and a holier co-operation.

But, ladies and gentlemen, I fear I am dwelling too long upon this branch of my subject. Before I resign it, I cannot forbear to direct your attention to a series of works on rural embellishment, which, by a painful dispensation of Providence has been suddenly brought to a close. I mean the writings of the late Mr. Downing, of Newburgh. I know no works so well calculated to give elevated conceptions of the dignity and the charm of rural occupations—none which have done and are doing so much for the embellishment of our glorious country. Nor do I know any which teach a purer morality. It is now understood that another of the series, more extended; and far surpassing its predecessors in its eloquence, and the beauty of its illustrations, was in a course of preparation. Under any circumstances, the death of such a man is a public bereavement. Coming as it did, it was still more deplorable. It is an irreparable loss. The country could better have spared more than one of its most distinguished statesmen, or jurists, or divines. Their places might have been supplied, but his is not likely to be in our day. It is only once in an age that a man rises up so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his profession, and with the sacred flame of art kindled in his bosom by the breath of Heaven.

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There is one subject of great interest, which was briefly referred to by the distinguished gentleman, who delivered the opening lecture, and which, I am sure my auditors will pardon me for presenting to them with greater particularity. It is a subject on which I have bestowed some thought, and, in respect to which, I made, a few years ago, an attempt (I am sorry to say an unsuccessful one) to enlist the co-operation of some of our wealthy citizens. I mean the establishment in this city of an American Academy of Art, the foundation of which shall be a collection of pictures and statuary open to the public, furnished with all the facilities which artists require for study and improvement in their professions, and with schools of design for the gratuitous instruction of young persons without pecuniary means. With the exception of a public park of proper extent, I consider this nearly the only great

want of the city, which can be supplied by ourselves. Popular education is amply provided for by public law. The preaching of the Gospel is extended, by the unassisted operation of the voluntary system, to every portion of the city. The sick are healed, the hungry fed, and the naked clothed, by munificent public charities. A noble library, already the most valuable in the world in proportion to the number of volumes it contains, is about to be opened to the public, and will give to the name of Astor a duration as lasting as the city itself. Another popular institution, designed for the special benefit of the industrious classes, and endowed with the same princely liberality, will insure to the name of Cooper an undying life. These institutions are, in some degree, local, though they are to be open to the whole American public. But an Academy of Art, containing specimens of the best schools of painting, ancient and modern, casts of ancient statues, and modern statuary of the most eminent masters, would become immediately a national institution. It would make New-York the emporium of Art for the western hemisphere. Artists would flock to it from all sections of the Union, and from every portion of this continent, and return to the study of nature, with a full knowledge of all that the genius of man has done for the perfection of the processes by which she may be most faithfully and feelingly copied. I believe I may safely say that no country, which has had so short a life as ours, has done more for art. But it is all the work of artists themselves, and the private encouragement by which they have been sustained. Neither the public nor the private wealth of the country has come forward with any great or permanent scheme of endowment for the encouragement of American art. It has struggled on unaided, battling dauntlessly with all the discouragements which have beset its path—discouragements arising from the want of elementary instruction at home, and the rivalry of better disciplined competitors abroad—and yet it has gained for some of its votaries an immortal name.

It was thought that such an institution as I have described, might be founded upon an extended individual subscription. I have abandoned all such hope. It must be the work of some one man—some one of our wealthy and enlightened citi-

zens like Astor and Cooper, who, under the influence of a good inspiration, shall see in the accomplishment of a great public work for the benefit of present and future generations, a better motive and a higher fame than the brief possession of the few hundred thousand dollars which are necessary for it. I would not have him underrate the cost of such an institution. I do not think less than four hundred thousand dollars would suitably accomplish it—one hundred and fifty thousand for the ground and the building, an equal amount for the purchase of pictures and statuary, and a hundred thousand more to be invested to meet its annual wants. There are men enough in this city whose fortunes would not be inconveniently diminished by such a contribution, who may, in a year, or a month, in the order of human life, be summoned to surrender all they possess into the hands of those who do not need it, or by whom it may be uselessly employed. I believe no higher niche remains to be filled in the temple of our city's fame than this—no work, by which a man may more certainly inscribe his name upon its loftiest pediment—there to stand until the last column which sustains it, shall crumble into dust.

It is in establishments and institutions like these that the munificence of Republics and Republicans is best displayed. While all individual profusion is at war with the spirit of the system under which we live, and can only bring with it un-mixed evil, public institutions for the elevation of industry and the perfection of art—institutions in which all can meet on the footing of equality inherent in our political organization—are at once the conservative agencies and the glory of free governments.

But it is time for me to return to a topic, to which I briefly alluded at the commencement of my remarks. I mean the necessity of a practical conformity of the social movement to the principles on which the political organization is founded. I believe there is only one condition to be fulfilled in order to ensure for our system of government all the stability of which human institutions are capable. It must be carried out in the spirit in which it was created. Society must not set up distinctions unknown to the system itself, and give them, by

habit or conventional sanctions, an influence at war with it. We must not weaken what was designed to be secure, or introduce what was designed to be excluded.

And 1st, let it be distinctly understood, that the law must be inflexibly maintained. I use the term law in its largest sense, not only as including what has been specifically decreed, but as comprehending the general order, on the preservation of which the inviolability of all public authority depends. The law is the will of the people constitutionally expressed. Whoever arrays himself against it, excepting to procure its repeal in the mode prescribed by the fundamental compact, commits an act of treachery to the people themselves. The law is the basis of all popular supremacy. It is the very feature by which free government is distinguished from despotism. To uphold it is one of the highest duties which is devolved on us as freemen. It is always possible that those who are intrusted with its execution, may err in the performance of their duty. They may employ unnecessary, arbitrary, or even wanton severity in enforcing it. For all this they may be held to a rigid account. But no error in the execution can impair the obligation to uphold it. It must be understood, and without reservation, that the law is to be inflexibly maintained.

2d. Kindred to the inviolability of the law, is the inviolability of rights of property. Under our system of government life is always secure, except from private passion, hatred and revenge, and these the law visits with a retribution which many regard as incompatible with the humanity of the age. The inviolability of private property rests upon the same basis as security to life. It is one of the leading objects of all social compacts. Life, liberty, property—security to those is the great end for which men enter into society. We believe it to be prejudicial to the general interest that property shall be kept in masses by the operation of law. We have declared that children, in cases of intestacy, shall inherit equally. We believe that accumulations of wealth should not be made permanent. We have abolished entails. We believe that the distribution of property should not be unduly restricted. We have provided that the absolute power of alienation shall not

be suspended beyond the period of two lives in being at the creation of the state. All these provisions are designed to distribute as soon as possible, without discouraging individual enterprise and industry, accumulations of property, which superior sagacity, good fortune or accident, has created. None of these restrictions are invasions of the rights which social compacts are designed to secure. We may go farther, and assign limits to future accumulation or to the investment of the proceeds of industry in particular objects. These are questions of practical wisdom and policy, which may be fairly settled by reference to their probable influence upon the general interest and prosperity. But any regulation, which has the effect of rendering an existing tenure insecure or worthless, is a direct violation of one of the great purposes, for which we entered into society, and must weaken the security of liberty and life, by impairing the fundamental obligations by which all are supported. This is a question in which the many have a far deeper interest than the few. The tens of millions which are held by large proprietors, are as nothing in comparison with the hundreds of millions distributed in smaller portions among the great body of people. The security of all must stand or fall together.

3d. The different members of the general society must understand and be willing to do justice to each other. External forms of organization, rules of political conduct, do much. But the internal spirit which animates the system and imparts its vital powers, must be in harmony with its formal constitution, in order that its movements may meet with no interruption or shock from the antagonism of the elements of which it is composed. One of the theories of our government is, that all are politically equal. We have reduced the theory to practice by making suffrage universal, and public employments and honors accessible to all. Let us forbear to set up social distinctions, which may practically affect, though certainly to a limited extent, what political distinctions produce in other countries. Let us avoid, as far as in us lies, all which tends to divide society into classes—for all such divisions imply diversity of interests, and almost always produce isolation. Social distinctions must of necessity be, in the highest degree, evanescent with

us. We have neither orders of nobility nor permanent estates to sustain or perpetuate them. They rest almost exclusively upon commercial wealth, and they partake of its vicissitudes and its instability. To seek to found distinctions upon wealth alone, where accumulations of property are so transient, is not only vainly attempting what is unattainable, but its tendency is to make wealth the object of pernicious jealousies, and thus to inflict upon society a great public evil. Absolute equality in the possession of property, as a practical condition of life, is but the dream of the enthusiast. Nature has so pronounced it by endowing her children unequally. But in the enjoyment of all the comforts of life, and in the means of satisfying all our necessary wants, the condition of men approaches much nearer to equality than is generally supposed. We rarely consider how little is needed where there are no artificial wants to disquiet us—how much is required in circles where conventional exactions are the rule of expenditure. Misunderstanding on this subject—ignorance, on the part of one portion of the community, of the objects, desires and wants of other portions, lie at the foundation of all the jealousies which exist between those whose condition is unequal. This misunderstanding should be corrected—these jealousies removed; and he who, instead of contributing to objects of such vital importance, shall attempt to excite in one portion of the community prejudices against another, should be ranked among the most dangerous enemies of the republic.

I have already spoken of divisions into classes as undesirable and pernicious in their tendency. They carry with them the idea of opposite interests. Dissociation, separate action, alienation, jealousy, unkindness, opposition, hatred, collision; these are the steps by which their progress to maturity is to be traced in other countries. Let us, then, regard each other as members of a single association, standing in the same relation to the system, of which we are a part, and having none but common interests. Let him who has little property, consider that those who possess it, take with it burdens and responsibilities from which he himself is exempt,—that they contribute, in proportion to their possessions, to the public expenditure, that their anxieties are increased, and that great

wealth, as the experience of all ages attests, does not contribute to augment the sum of human happiness. On the other hand, let those who have much, consider that much is required of them,—that their possessions are a sacred trust which will be best fulfilled by a liberal and confiding regard for those, whom fortune has less highly favored. In a word, gentlemen, sympathy and fraternal feeling must take the place of indifference and distrust in the intercourse of those whose condition is unequal. Organize society as you will, however correct your formulas, or however wisely adjusted the different parts of the system, you cannot make it independent of the passions and affections of men. It is by enlightening and purifying these that the great ends of society are to be wrought out.

And finally, fellow citizens, let us bear ever in remembrance, as a motive to the fulfilment of our social obligations, that we stand before the world as the chief representatives of free institutions. The great features of this continent seem to mark it out for the accomplishment of labors and destinies of corresponding magnitude—the Mississippi pouring into the ocean the majestic current it has accumulated in its course of three thousand miles—the Niagara, collecting the waters of an inland Sea, and precipitating them into another in a cataract of gigantic volume and Herculean power—the Rocky Mountain chain, pushing up its snowy summits to the heavens, with its deep indentation cut down to its base, and indicating a design as palpable as if the Omniscient Power that created it had said, “Through this pass thousands of years hence, the railway which is to unite the Columbia River with the Hudson, shall bear the burdens of associated continents and oceans.” A country thus strongly marked in its physical lineaments, is a fit theatre for the great experiment we are making of the competency of mankind to self-government, and for the social developments which are in progress here on so vast a scale.

This city, as the metropolis of such a country, should correspond with it in the magnitude of its improvements. Though yet in its infancy, it has proved itself, in all it has done, not unworthy of the distinction. Père La Chaise sinks into insignificance when contrasted with the sylvan grandeur of Greenwood. The aqueduct which conveys the Croton River across

the Harlem, compares well in the solidity and beauty of its architecture with the kindred work spanning the Valley of Alcantara, or with those magnificent structures, which, after the lapse of two thousand years, though now falling into ruins, still stretch across the Campagna, and by the agency of which, Imperial Rome was perpetually refreshed by the pure waters of her distant hills.

For what remains to be done—for popular institutions, on a scale so broad as to embrace her whole population, and to endow all with the capacities necessary for the discharge of their social and political duties—for the facilities which her industrious classes require to prepare them for the exercise of their various avocations—for the depositories of art, and the elementary training which are needed to call out genius and to refine the public taste—she must look to her commercial wealth. Her mercantile men have a reputation as wide as the world itself for their activity, the grasp of their enterprise, and their fidelity to their pecuniary engagements. Under their influence, aided by the unrivalled energy and skill of her ship-builders, her commerce has been pushed to the very confines of the habitable globe. Neither equatorial heat, nor polar frosts, nor barbarism, nor the conflicts of civilized races, have constituted an impediment to the execution of their commercial adventures. In the beauty, the speed and the internal arrangements of their ships they have left all rivals at an immeasurable distance behind. They have accomplished all this by their own unassisted energies. They have not, like the mercantile classes of England, been aided by a direct trade with extensive colonial dependencies, from which, until a very recent day, other nations were shut out. They have cast themselves upon the ocean, self-reliant and fearless, and entered into triumphant competition with the whole commercial world. Their boldness, their perseverance, and their success have contributed, in an eminent degree, to the practical vindication of the great element of freedom, as the true basis of international communications and exchanges, and have had a powerful agency in compelling other nations to relax the rigor of their commercial systems. One more great truth remains to be asserted and verified by a stern adherence to the fundamental

principles of our institutions in their social as well as their political requirements—a truth to which we should cling with undying faith—that extended commerce, social refinement and accumulated wealth, are perfectly compatible with public order, domestic purity and national strength.

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